

Milk Crates

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/39317223) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/39317223>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandoms:	Dream SMP , Minecraft (Video Game)
Relationship:	Wilbur Soot & Technoblade & TommyInnit & Phil Watson
Characters:	TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF) , Phil Watson Philza , Wilbur Soot
Additional Tags:	Wilbur Soot and Technoblade and TommyInnit are Siblings , Alternate Universe - Foster Family , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , TommyInnit-centric (Video Blogging RPF) , Scared TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Mentioned Toby Smith Tubbo , Mentioned Ranboo (Video Blogging RPF) , Unofficial Sequel , good ending , Good Parent Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , TommyInnit Needs a Hug (Video Blogging RPF) , and he gets several , this is actually the healing arc , you're fucking welcome , no beta we die like ranboo when sam doesn't understand how leverage works , Implied/Referenced Suicide , Implied/Referenced Child Abuse , both just mentioned as backstory from previous fic
Language:	English
Series:	Part 6 of Freedom (SBI)
Collections:	tommyinnit pipeline
Stats:	Published: 2022-05-30 Words: 5,987 Chapters: 1/1

Milk Crates

by [ChelseaFrown \(orphan_account\)](#).

Summary

This is The Happy end of Nights like These. The ACTUAL happy ending, not just the theoretical "Good" ending. It is part of a series, and it most likely will not make sense without the context of the original Fic.

Notes

As a happy birthday to My lovely partner, here's another unofficial ending of NLT! Keep your eyes peeled for another sad ending in a few weeks too, but for now, have some good old-fashioned actual genuine healing, bitches.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

The windows were down in the van, Tommy's whole life was packed haphazardly in bags just behind him. He was free, he took that first breath of air as the person who he promised his child self he would always be and it felt like the first true air he'd ever fucking breathed, something ice-cold that still left him beaming and warm all the way to his fingertips. His music was blaring so loudly he could hardly hear himself think. His skin was raised in goosebumps, tingling and half numb and still he couldn't be bothered to care as he went ten over the speed limit down the highway, absolutely no idea where he was going to end up. The tank was full and he had plenty of cash to settle down wherever he wanted to, if he found the need, and enough skills in bullshitting his way through life to make more money if he *never* settled down. This was the freedom he wanted, this was him!

'This.. was so, unbelievably stupid,' Tommy thought, staring at his cell phone as Margaret's name popped up on his call ID for the third time in a row. He'd let her ring through twice, but she wasn't even leaving a *voicemail*, just ringing him again, and he knew she wouldn't stop until he picked up. He wasn't even sure how she *knew*. What were the odds someone heard him leave? Why would they have *called her*? He bit back a groan and finally picked up on call four.

"Maaaa-" Tommy groaned, not even pretending to hide the whine in his voice.

"If you want to sneak out of town undetected, maybe don't drive past my house at Mach-5 next time, love. I gave you plenty of time to get out of the immediate area before calling."

"Yeah, you really did, what the hell?"

"You are... *Legally* allowed to leave your father's home if you so wish. But as you did so like a bat out of hell, I'm assuming you didn't do so with permission, or his blessing?"

"I wasn't driving *that* fast"

"Thomas," Margaret scolded lightly

“Clem came in for my graduation. We.. fought, and I bailed. It’s complicated. I needed to get out of there.”

“We had a conversation about where you should go when you needed to leave Watson’s home temporarily, did we not?”

“Who said anything about temporary?” Tommy spat bitterly.

“What?” She asked, her voice laced with high notes of panic. “Is that why you weren’t answering? Did you take something? Drink something? Oh God, Tommy, where are you? Are- are you safe? I can get in my car right now, you don’t need to do anything rash, things will get bett-”

“No! No, not... not like that, Ma, not again, I’m not there again, I promise,” Tommy spoke gently, his hand shaking as he gripped his phone, remembering the way her hands shook when she held him after... that night. After the nights that followed.

“Swear it to me, please.”

“I swear. I just meant that I packed everything up, I’m moving out, I moved out, permanently, I’m gone. Gone gone.”

“Love, you didn’t need to-”

“I know. I just- FUCK, Ma, I always do this shit! I always have this stupid idea in my head that I HAVE to do these things for people, and there was only this one thing I ever wanted to do for me, you know? All I EVER promised myself was when I finished school I’d just... go. And I did! I went! And I was so *happy* to have gone, and the second you called, and I stopped to think about it for a *second*? All I could think was about how much of a fucking *idiot* I was for leaving! I had everything in that fucking house! I had a dad and two brothers and my best friends just down the street and so many people who care about me and fucking *Clem* all RIGHT THERE. And I still have to be a little bitch boy and run away because it’s all I ever know how to do! I don’t know how to let myself *have* good things! Why can’t I just have ONE good thing? Why do I always FORCE myself to fuck things up? What’s the fucking

point of me even TRYING if every time I know I'm just going to ruin it with my own two hands? If I know I'm going to tear it down bit by bit, you know? What good is the fucking therapy if I'm not getting better?" Tommy's voice cracked and rasped as he heaved the words from his chest, like dragging them from his chest like a weight so heavy it had sunk far into his bones, carved itself into his ribcage, and wound itself into his lungs.

"Come home, Tommy. You don't have to see Phil yet, just come back here, for now, we'll figure this out, okay? Once you've calmed down, just head home, and I promise everything will be just fine."

"What if they hate me?"

"I'll put Evan outside their house with a battery-powered Amp and let him play smoke on the water for the next week straight," Margaret joked softly. "They love you, silly boy. They're going to be terrified to see you gone. And if you can't live in their home with them, darling, that's *fine*. I happen to know of a lovely little two-bedroom house right in town whose owner is more than willing to rent it out, only a mile or so away from them. I bet if you look real sad at her, she'll even help you paint that ugly front door, hm?" Tommy laughed wetly.

"Yeah- yeah, actually, I'd really, really like to rent the house I think. I- god that would be amazing. Are you sure?"

"Absolutely. It means I won't have to give Evan extra allowance to mow the lawn there anymore. Or drive him forty-five minutes into town to do so," She laughed. "It's basically free labor."

"I'll be there in a couple hours, Ma. Thank you, so much. I can't... I can't thank you enough for this, really. I- I really don't know what I'd do out here alone."

"You would have been just fine on your own, love, but the thing is, you never have to be. That's what you've got my nosy ass and whatever chaos the Watson's have going on for."

"Gasp! A *swear*?"

“I’m raising your rent.”

“I haven’t even started *paying* rent yet!”

“And yet, it’s raised! How strange! Drive safely, Thomas, dear. Try obeying the traffic laws this time, would you? And turn your music down, you’ll ruin your hearing.”

“What’s that? Can you speak up? I can’t seem to hear you, there’s this weird ringing in my ears...” Tommy teased.

“Yes, yes, jest if you must. I love you, Darling.”

“Yeah, I love you too, Ma.” Tommy hung up and drug his hands down his face with an incredulous laugh. He’d barely made it out of the *county*, but he knew, this was the better option, anyway. Throwing the van in the reverse and squalling tires out of the gas station parking lot as he headed east, headed home, was the easiest decision he’d ever made.

Phil woke up to his phone ringing. It was still *dark* outside, but the kind of dark that made it clear it was just about to give way to morning. The kind of dark Technoblade found his peace in. He almost ignored the call, but he reluctantly answered it with a gruff “Hello?”

“Hello, Phil. When you wake up properly, Tommy’s room is going to be empty and his van will be gone. Please don’t panic. He... ran away, of sorts, but he’s safe, and he’s heading back towards the area now. He’s coming to my home, but I do presume he’ll quickly head from mine to yours before he decides to properly make any decision of moving out of your residence permanently. He got overwhelmed after an argument with his sister, apparently. I wanted to warn you, so as to not cause you any undue distress.” Phil sat up and stumbled toward Tommy’s bedroom, whereupon throwing the door open and flipping on the light, he found she was right. It was completely bare. He knew the door slamming against the wall

would wake up the boys, but he couldn't think enough to *care*. "He- what? He just *left*? How did you know? How did you get him to come back?"

"He drove past my home with your oldest son's music blaring at full volume while I was still awake after an insomnia bout," She chuckled. "I assumed He was... just getting air, but after a few hours, since he had not returned, I called him, and talked him into returning. He'll be arriving in about an hour at my home, I assume he'll sleep here, and be back at yours sometime tomorrow afternoon proper. I do want to let you know, I have extended him the offer of renting the home I own in the suburbs near you when he expressed his fear of quote, 'fucking things up.' I know- it's nonsense, but he is a teenage boy, and sometimes we must give them things that will let them breathe and heal at a pace that lets them move toward safety. If he wants to move in there, I of course will allow him. It is very close to your home, and I'll be giving him a spare key with the expectation that he gives it to you in case of emergencies." Wilbur and Technoblade were both standing behind Phil now, Wilbur's lanky fingers clutching Phil's sleeve like a lifeline, staring blankly into the room, while his other hand seemed to be wrapped carefully around his brother.

"But he's okay? Right?"

"Yes. He was sound of mind and entirely uninjured when I spoke to him, save from being slightly overwhelmed. He's just fine, Mr. Watson. Your son will be home soon, I promise,"

"Thank you, Margaret."

"Of course. Tend to your boys, I think I can hear them breathing over your shoulder. Tell them I said I'll take care of him until I get him safely to you three to do a better job of it."

"You think we could do a *better* job?"

"Of course, who else could?" Margaret said with a laugh, and the phone went dead.

"...Dad?" Wilbur's voice was meek, hoarse with sleep, and laced with agony.

“He’s fine. He’s on his way to Margaret’s, apparently. He freaked out and left, but she- she’s getting him to come home, he’s fine, we aren’t losing him,” Phil promised, turning around to pull both of them into a tight hug. “I promise you two, we *aren’t losing him.*”

Pulling into Margaret’s driveway at just past 8 AM wasn’t familiar, but it *felt* familiar, just like slipping on a well-worn pair of boots. Turning the key of the ignition and sliding the seat belt off his lap, opening the door with just a small squeal and letting his shoes scuff against the well-loved pavement, then brush dew-wet grass, and climb timeworn and chipped brick stairs, raising a hand to knock only to be greeted by the door swinging back and the face of a mother he used to have wrapping her arms softly around him, her chin tucked over his shoulder and her hair in a frizzy braid. She was in a soft nightgown Tommy swore he’d bought her for a Christmas once, what felt like a lifetime ago, and her reading glasses were perched on her nose and just slightly crooked. He wrapped his arms around her too, and he could almost picture their first hug, years ago, before his growth spurt, when he was a head shorter than her and his head rested on her collarbone and she’d tucked his stringy curls behind his ears and told him she’d love him no matter how broken he thought he was. Somehow, he thought, those words still rang true despite all that had happened when her hands brushed slightly past his scarred cheek to tuck a stray curl out of his eyes and behind his ears he never had quite grown into like she’d promised.

“Chamomile, dear?” She asked, like she wasn’t still holding his arms as if she was checking if he was really there.

“Yeah, yeah, That’d be really great, actually.” She didn’t let go for a beat, then another, and then her hands squeezed him lightly and she guided him to the kitchen island, as if he’d ever forget the layout of this home. He sat down at the stool he sat at a million times, the one he’d eat breakfast at and do his homework at, and she gave him a soft smile that held so much worry and grief as she filled the kettle.

“I let your father know you were safe, and that you’d come to him in your own time, just so he wouldn’t worry. Is- is that okay? I didn’t think to ask.”

“That’s perfect, Ma. I didn’t even- hell, I didn’t even think to call them,” Tommy laughed with a half-choked sob. “I’m an awful son, it didn’t even cross my *mind*, god, that would have killed them, what was I thinking?”

“You were afraid, darling. It’s okay. You’re okay,” She soothed, moving around to rub his back. “You’re alright, you can cry, it’s alright sweetheart,” Tommy let out another sob, his hands curling around himself protectively and she pulled him so he was leaning against her shoulder.

“I just want to be okay, why is it so *hard*? *Why am I just a fuck up?*”

“What do I tell you?”

“ ‘*You are not your mistakes, Thomas.*’ ‘*You are more than your failures, and you are more than your success. You are a whole and complex human being regardless of what you have done or may do.*’ I know, I know. Why do I *feel* like a fuck up, then?”

“Because you’ve been dealt a very, very difficult hand in life, and the people in your life for a long time made you think that it was your fault. That was their error, not yours, but you’re the one suffering for their incompetence.”

“God, do you always know what to say? Do you have a manual or something?”

“Oh, heavens no. I’m making this up as I go along. I’m spouting complete gibberish and hoping if I say it with enough intention it’ll work anyway,” She said with a wink. “Honey, honey?”

“Yeah, please.” She nodded and turned to grab the jar from the cupboard when Tommy heard the sound of footsteps from the hallway. Evan rounded the corner looking annoyed and exhausted.

“Bro, is having breakdowns at the asscrack of dawn actually necessary? Can we at least wait until noon?”

“Good to see you too, monster,” Tommy said with a huff.

“Yeah, yeah. Morning affection or whatever. Hi, Mom. Can I have tea too, or is that reserved for the favorite son?” Margaret laughed lightly and pulled another mug out.

“I suppose the second-best can have some tea, just this once.” Tommy choked on air at the casual jab. He looked over to Evan, expecting some dissatisfaction, but he looked content, leaning sleepily on his arm sitting on his usual stool from when Tommy lived here too. Tommy looked him over, and something caught his eye.

“Do... you have a *tattoo*?” Tommy asked incredulously.

“Huh? Oh, yeah, a friend’s dad gave it to me, he’s an artist. Cool, innit? It’s a little monster.” Evan gave him a crooked grin, showing off the tattoo on his inner arm. “Mom almost had a heart attack.”

“Jury’s still out on if it was a heart attack or a stroke, actually. It does, admittedly, look quite nice, though.” Margaret shrugged, rolling her eyes. “I obviously would have preferred if he’d *asked permission*, but it was a little late by the time he came home with it wrapped in plastic, so,”

“Have you... mellowed out? Am I dreaming?” Tommy teased, sipping the tea in front of him. It burned the roof of his mouth. “Ah! Shit!”

“Boiling water is hot, Thomas,” Margaret deadpanned. “Also, that’s instant karma.”

“If I got a tattoo you would have skinned it off of my body and bound a journal with it, admit it!” Tommy protested.

“Well, that would be a little hypocritical of me, *I* have tattoos,” She said with a huff. “Several I got as a sixteen-year-old. Not my brightest moment, of course, but self-expression isn’t frowned upon in this house so long as it’s done safely.”

“You DO NOT have tattoos, *shut up*, ” Tommy laughed, leaning forward.

“Ma has Mickey mouse tattooed so high on her thigh it’s basically on her ass,” Evan said solemnly. “And she used to have a tramp stamp but she got that one covered up into a lower back thing, and a full rib piece that turns into an upper back piece.” Evan nodded. “I found out when I got mine, too. Who knew she was cool, right?”

“You yelled at us for drawing on ourselves with *markers!*”

“Permanent markers aren’t *skin safe!*” She argued back exasperatedly.

“This is the biggest betrayal of my life, I’ve been lied to! How can I go on?”

“The both of you are grounded,” Margaret huffed, shaking her head.

“I have soccer practice at 11,” Evan deadpanned

“I’m a whole adult,” Tommy replied at the same time. “Hey! Wait! I don’t even live here!”

“If you think not living here can keep her from grounding you, you’re sadly mistaken, dude. I’m pretty sure she grounded Uncle Mark once.”

“The one who lives in another country?” Tommy asked, baffled.

“Yes!” Evan laughed, “How many Uncle Mark’s do we know?”

“Oh, speaking of Mark, Tommy, your birthday gift from him arrived in the mail to our house two months late and smelling like salt, so good luck with whatever on earth he sent you. I was planning on giving it to you when we met for coffee next weekend,” Margaret laughed, gesturing toward a package sitting on the kitchen table proper.

“He.. sent a gift?” Tommy asked with a bemused grin.

“I know right? How weird is that? Dude doesn’t even send *me* gifts.” Evan snorted. “Man met you one time and decided you get weird ocean gifts, sucks to be you.”

“I’m terrified.”

“You probably should be,” Margaret agreed. “My brother always has been an odd one,” She teased, tossing it down in front of him. He opened the box and pulled out the *rattiest* fishing hat he’d ever seen, covered in lures and pins and patches, along with a polaroid of an incredible ocean sunset, and a little bobber keychain. A note was stuck in the box in his wild handwriting.

“I know this was a... *bite*... late, but oh... Whale! I hope you had a good eighteenth, kid! Love ya, Tom! Uncle Mark.” Tommy read out, laughing. “Oh my gosh, he’s nuts, isn’t he?” Tommy pulled the hat out and immediately shoved it on Evan’s head. It smelled of ocean breeze and sweat, but they both were giggling and it looked ridiculous enough that they couldn’t help but take pictures, all three of them huddled together, two of them with red-rimmed eyes from tears, and one from sleep, taking turns wearing the hat to send to Mark and then some with Tommy’s polaroid camera for his memories.

Eventually, the tea was cool and finished, and Evan left to get ready for practice, and Tommy was guided gently to his old bedroom, still arranged the way he left it, and told to sleep. He wanted to argue, he *did* , but the second his head hit the pillow, his eyes fluttered shut, and he was out like a light.

“You said he was coming home, right?” Wilbur asked Phil for the fifth time in the last hour.

“Margaret said once he slept, she’d send him home, Wil. She’s a lot of things, but I don’t think she’d be dishonest with me.”

“But it’s been *hours!*”

“Sleeping does usually take a few hours, bud,” Clementine chirped from a dining chair, leaning lazily against her hand. “Who exactly is this Margaret broad again? Like, if she’s one of his ex-fosters... Why the hell is he like, at her house? Isn’t that weird?”

“It’s a complicated situation,” Phil started, wincing.

“She’s nuts,” Wilbur replied flatly.

“Completely off her rocker,” Techno agreed.

“Like, on a level of Totally sane to Dr. Frankenstein, She’s convinced not only is the moon landing fake, so is the *moon*. ‘The stars are just air holes in the box the government keeps us in’ levels of nuts,” Wilbur adds on.

“How did she get a *foster license*? ” Clementine screeched, sitting up.

“The boys are *exaggerating!* She’s just very... overprotective. She was a very good foster for Tommy, it just didn’t work out. They are still on good terms.”

“Oh, god, I thought we needed to call the police or something, christ,” She huffed, holding her chest. “You two are fucking awful, no wonder you get along with Tommy,”

“Hey, that’s our brother, fuck you!” Wilbur yelled, indignant.

“Uh, my brother *first* , AND my cousin! Actually. Wait. Does that... does that make him your cousin? I think this family tree is getting a little sketchy, Phil.” Phil looked at the three of them, now staring at him like he’d hold the answers.

“Sorry, I don’t speak whatever language this is,” Phil said with a shrug.

“Genealogy?”

“Adoption?”

“Hillbilly?” The three offered in tandem, before glancing at each other and grinning.

“... Millennial,” Phil replied, taking a sip of his coffee to hide his smile at their matching indignant screams of offense.

“I’m disowning you! You’re disowned! I’m only keeping your kids!” Clementine hollered, shaking her head.

“God, you really *are* just the female Tommy, aren’t you? I think he yells in the same decibel range,” Techno huffed, shaking his head. “Who *raised* you, *howler monkeys*? ”

“I mean,” Phil said, shrugging, “She gets it from her mother. I always say my tinnitus is from growing up with her, not from the war,” Clementine choked on her coffee.

“God, mom really was loud as shit, wasn’t she?” Clem laughed. “She loved to hear herself talk, She’d sing off-key cooking us soup on a camp stove at the top of her lungs in the pouring rain when I was a kid,” She shook her head. “I miss that woman every fuckin’ day, y’know?”

“I’m so sorry, Clementine, I’m sure growing up without her, without a whole family...”

“Yeah. Yeah, It wasn’t great. But you’re here now, yeah? Last living bit of her and all. With your two and a half kids and white picket fence bullshit. Even if you can’t make Nona’s food.”

“You’ll have to teach me, what do you say?”

“I- yeah, yeah. I’d like that, actually, I think. Tommy used to be a terrible cook too, I mean granted, he was ten, but same principle, right?” Phil huffed a laugh.

“Right,” He agreed, reaching across to squeeze her hand. “We can do it together, maybe? The three of us.”

-

The morning dragged on into the early afternoon, and Wilbur’s anxieties just spiked higher and higher.

“What if he- what if he *doesn’t* come back?”

“What do you mean, Wil?” Phil asked gently.

“I mean, *fuck*, this was his whole *thing* right? He was going to skip town! We never could talk him out of it! We tried for months! And all it took was a *phone call* from fucking Margaret? And he came straight to her? What if he doesn’t *want* to be here? What if he really *is* better off with her? I mean fuck, what if she was right? She was his mother first, or whatever, that’s what she said, what if she really is equipped to take care of Tommy more than we ever were? What if he comes back here, and all we do is *hurt him again?!* ” He ran

his fingers through his hair. “What if he realizes it too, and he just... Doesn’t come back? Just stays there?”

“Or, maybe, He’ll just show up after Margaret’s done helicopter parenting him,” Tommy teased from the doorway. Wilbur spun around, his eyes wide and already brimming with tears. “Hey,” Tommy said sheepishly, rubbing the back of his neck. “I... have some shit to explain, yeah?” Wilbur dove at him, arms wrapped around his shoulders. “Hey, big man. I’m sorry, I know, I already gave myself the third degree, don’t worry”

—

“I’m so glad you’re okay,” Wilbur breathed, holding Tommy tightly. “I was so afraid, Toms. I thought we’d never see you again.”

“I couldn’t do it,” Tommy laughed, his voice choking on the words. “You were right, you all were, I can’t leave this place, leave you all. I don’t even think I really wanted to, I’m just a self-destructive idiot.”

“Yeah, I could have told you that,” Clementine snorted. “Oh, wait.”

“Ugh, you’re still here?” Tommy scowled, rolling his eyes.

“Thought you missed me, Chirp?”

“Don’t you have friends or something you have to annoy?”

“No friends have priority over annoying my baby brother, I’m afraid.”

“You know, you’re my least favorite woman.”

“You know three women, That’s really not that much of an insult.” Tommy groaned, pulling back from Wilbur. He pulled Clem into a tight hug, being sure to squeeze her extra tight to be just a tad petty.

“Fuck, I have *ribs*, you know?”

“Suffer.”

“I’ve changed my mind, I’m going to live with your weird not mom. Fuck this family.” Tommy froze for a moment, then got a wide smirk.

“Actually? You *absolutely* have to meet Ma. You’re meeting her soon, no arguments.”

“Oh, no,” Clementine muttered. Phil huffed out a laugh, and Tommy looked over at him. His grin fell into something mournful.

“*Dad-*” Tommy all but wailed, reaching for him. Phil moved, bridging the space between them and pulling Tommy to his chest. “I’m so *sorry*, *I just-*”

“Hey, hey, Kiddo, it’s okay. You got overwhelmed. You’re okay. You’re home, you’re safe, that’s all that matters right now. We can talk about everything else later, yeah? It’s going to be fine. We’re all going to be fine, bud. I promise.”

“I was gonna leave, I didn’t even say goodbye! I just- I just-”

“Shh, It’s okay Toms. You’re okay.” Phil mumbled, rocking them gently from side to side.

“Fuck, I’ve cried so much today, what is wrong with me,” Tommy sniffed. “It was my own choice and I’m still blubbering like a baby-”

“It was a trauma response, kid, and you’re still in the midst of it, it’s okay to cry.” Techno huffed from the doorway. “It’s been a long day for you. I think it’d be weirder and more concerning if you weren’t crying, right now.”

“I- are you going to hate me if I move out?” Tommy blurted, pulling away from Phil.

“You’ll be eight blocks away, Toms, I think we’ll all be alright, yeah?”

“You aren’t mad?”

“If this is what you need, I am always going to support you, Tommy. Because I’m your dad, and all I want is for you to be happy, mate. That’s all I’m ever going to ask from you. You can move out or you can live in your bedroom until you’re forty-five, and I will still love you exactly the same, okay? I promise.”

“You’re more than I deserve,” Tommy laughed wetly.

“Nah, mate. You deserve the world.”

—

“Why am I meeting this woman again?”

“Because I said so, Clementine. Shut up and help me move boxes, *please* .”

“Okay, but why specifically did you insist I be here alone today? Like, Wilbur and Techno both offered to help move the last of your shit into the house, but it *has* to be just me?”

“You’ll get it when she gets here! Will you just carry the damn keyboard in?”

“Thomas, are you making your sister carry that heavy keyboard alone?!” Margaret huffed from behind the van. “How rude of you!”

“Oh shush! It weighs like twenty-five pounds!” Margaret let out a laugh, coming around into view. Her hair was neatly pulled back into her usual bun, and she was in her typical summer clothing, some sort of sundress and sandals. She had big, kind of obnoxious-looking sunglasses on, which Clem had a sudden urge to make fun of her for.

“Chivalry is dead, I swear,” She muttered, grinning at Tommy before turning to Clem. “Where *are* my manners? Hello, I’m Margaret, I’m Tommy’s last foster mother, and his landlord of sorts. You must be Clementine, I’ve heard all about you!”

“I’d ask if it was all good things, but we both know better,” Clementine said with a flat expression.

“Oh, darling, the absolute horror stories he’s told me of you? If I could get my hands on the idiots that let you grow up in that system with no proper support system... Well, too late for that now, I suppose. I fear at my age I wouldn’t do very well in prison anyway.” Margaret shook her head. “Now, Thomas, I believe you have a keyboard to carry inside while we grab the other two boxes, no?”

“You know, I hate you.”

“Yes, dear, I know.” Margaret agreed, wrapping him in a quick hug and a kiss to the side of the head. “Now, go!” Tommy groaned, but he did grab the keyboard and head into the house, Leaving Clem and Margaret standing alone at the van. “Clementine, dear, you look like you’re about to explode, please just speak your mind.”

“Those sunglasses look horrible.”

“Oh, I know. Tommy bought them for me for my first birthday he was with me. They’re absolutely hideous, aren’t they?” Clementine let out a short laugh, then paused, thought about

it, and burst into more giggles.

“Why do you wear them then?”

“Because he bought them intentionally because they were hideous, so I let him think I love them. One day he’ll own up to it and I’ll get to throw them away, but until then, I wear them all summer just to see him look mortified. Evan, my youngest- or I guess *technically* only-son, bought me a sun hat just as ugly, but it only took him a few years to admit it was on purpose. Thomas is a much harder nut to crack.”

“Oh, you’re *petty petty* aren’t you?”

“Thomas still doesn’t know I make his dirty chai latte decaf, I’m well beyond petty, I’m a *mom*.”

“Oh he did not think about us meeting at all, did he?”

“I think perhaps he thought it quite a bit, actually. I heard you’re Phil’s niece, right?” Margaret handed Clementine a box, grabbing the last one and carrying it into Tommy’s new house herself. “But you were never placed with him? That sounds quite difficult. I imagine, if I know Tommy as well as I *know* I do, he has some semblance of a plan.”

“Uh, yeah, I’m his niece. I think part of the reason I wasn’t placed is that as far as he knew, he had a nephew, and then he... didn’t, so, he never really looked for a niece, you know?” Margaret nodded, humming. “I suppose that does make some sense, though it’s kind of negligent of the foster system to have not let that bit of info reach him, don’t you think?” She set the box on the dining table, and Clem did the same. Margaret looked over Clem, and she suddenly felt weirdly self-conscious. “Have you ever considered cutting your hair a bit shorter? Your curls are absolutely beautiful, I think something like a long bob would suit your face absolutely wonderfully.”

“I always thought it’d make it look too square.”

“Not at all, it’d bring out those lovely cheekbones of yours. Margaret said with a soft smile, setting the sunglasses aside. Maybe you could get some highlights and lowlights as well, bring out your freckles and eyes. I have a wonderful hairdresser I could take you to, she’d absolutely love to play with natural blonde curls like yours-”

Wilbur was on Tommy’s couch, eating greasy, delivered pizza and groaning dramatically about his newest tour coming up.

“I have to be on the road for SIX MONTHS. It’s going to be awesome, yeah, but what am I going to do without our weekend pizza nights?”

“We order pizza from a national chain, Wil. We’ll just both get the same order and facetime. It’ll be fine,” Tommy laughed, shoving his brother off his lap. “We do this every time you go on tour.”

“Yeah but I’ve never been gone *this long!*” What will you do without me!?”

“Spend my weekend with people I actually like, maybe?”

“You are a cruel and unjust brother.”

“And you’ve got pizza sauce on your forehead, big dubs,” Tommy said, snorting. Wilbur glared and rubbed his forehead violently. “It’s going to be *fine*. Techno is literally eight blocks away with Dad, Clem is less than an hour’s drive away with Ma. Tubbo and Ranboo are back for spring break in like a month, and they’ll be back for like 6 weeks. It’s not like I’ll be alone.”

“I just worry,”

“I know you do, dipshit. But you don’t need to. I’m good, really. I’ve got Wiggles and Clarencio, yeah?” At their names, the two dogs perked up, yipping excitedly. Tommy laughed as they bounced over, licking Wilbur’s face. “And If I miss you too much, I’ll hop in the van and come annoy you, alright? It’s gonna be fine.”

“Alright, Toms.”

—

“Oh, did you get a new tattoo?” Tommy asked Clementine, sliding into the diner booth across from her.

“Yeah! Ma, Evan, and I got ‘em! We asked if you wanted to get one matching with us and you said no, *remember* ?”

“I don’t like needles!” Tommy defended, laughing. “It looks nice. I’m glad you’re staying with Ma. I knew you’d love her.”

“She’s really great, yeah. We’re getting our nails done after this I think.”

“Where is she, anyway?”

“Oh, getting our drinks.”

“Ugh, she always gets me decaf.”

“Oh, you know?”

“What, yeah, of course. You really think that Mom-zilla is letting *me* drink coffee? C’mon.” Tommy laughed. “Wait- how did YOU KNOW-”

—

“Tommy, I’m not using ‘y'all'd've’ in my novel.”

“Okay, but it would be funny.”

“It’s not a *word*?”

“I think it is, Blade.”

“It’s literally not.”

“This is gaslighting.”

“Ooh, a three-syllable word, look at you go,” Techno deadpanned. “Are you just here to antagonize me?”

“Yeah, pretty much.”

“Bruuhhh-”

—

“Okay, so how much Tumeric?”

“Two Tablespoons,” Tommy explained, watching Phil add the spices to the chicken.

“And the tablespoon is the...”

“The big one, Dad.”

“Oh my god, Phil.” Clem laughed, from where she was sitting on the counter.

“Well, I don’t know!” He defended. “Why would I know!”

“You have like five kids!”

“Where did *five* come from?!” Phil laughed, exasperatedly.

“Me and Tommy count as two each, obviously,” Clementine explained

“That math... still doesn’t add up.”

“What? Uh- Oh! Six! Listen, I’m gay, I can’t do math.” Phil looked back at her with a baffled expression.

“One, congrats? I think? Two, what is the correlation between sexuality and basic math skills?”

“No, no, I think that tracks, actually.” Tommy agreed. “She stopped being able to count the second she kissed a woman, can confirm.”

“Have kids, they said, it’ll be *fun* they said,” Phil mumbled, tossing the chicken in the pan. “How the fuck do I peel ginger?”

“Okay, hear me out, but it’s with a spoon.”

“There is NO WAY-”

—

“So how are you feeling today, Tommy?”

“You know, Puffy? I’m feeling really good, actually. Today’s a really good day.”

End Notes

You can find me on Twitter @FrownChelsea

You can come scream to me there if you want!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!